

January 19, 2021

Testimony on HB 245
Election Judges – Training and Signs – Accommodations for Voters in Need of Assistance
Ways and Means

Position: Favorable

Common Cause Maryland support HB 245 which would improve the process for training election judges on the methods used to assist or accommodate elderly and disabled voters as well as require the State Board of Elections to make clear signage available inside of polling sites that ensure voters are made aware of the assistance available to them when voting.

Election judges play a vital role in our elections. They ensure fair and accessible elections for all Marylanders and are trained to protect the integrity of the election process.

While many Marylanders stepped up to serve in the critical role during the 2020 election, the recruitment and adequate training of judges has long been an issue in the state. This has led to reports of polls opening late, long lines, judges failing to show up on election days and a number of other incidents – including elderly voters and those voters with disabilities not being provided with adequate assistance or even being made aware of the assistance available to them when voting.

HB 245 aims to address these by not only ensuring election judges receive improved training on how to apply these methods, but also that voters are made aware of the assistance available to them when at a polling site. We found that during the 2020 general election, voters were unaware they could have a placeholder in the instances where they are unable to stand for long periods of time and other options available to them. Signage would help to address this, and we encourage images be incorporated for those voters who are unable to read. Making these signs available in multiple languages will also ensure voters whose first language is not English are also made aware of the assistance available to them.

This bill will help ensure future Maryland elections run smoothly, especially for elderly and disable voters who vote in-person.

We urge a favorable report.